



Consumer Alert

Anti-Slamming Rules Protect Consumers!

The Michigan Public Service Commission (MPSC) and the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) have issued rules to protect consumers from having their telephone service slammed. Slamming is the practice of illegally switching a consumer's telephone service without his/her permission. This illegal switch can occur for local services as well as long distance.

Here is some valuable information about the anti-slamming rules:

Penalties

- The MPSC can fine telephone companies up to \$50,000 per switch for slamming offenses under Michigan law if it is determined, after a contested formal hearing before the MPSC, that a customer has been slammed. The Commission can also allow for recovery of damages to the slammed customer and payment of 10-50 percent of the fine to the customer.
- A company found in violation of slamming rules could lose its license to provide telephone service in Michigan.

Authorized Switching Methods

Your telephone service cannot be switched legally from one company to another unless one of the following methods is used to initiate and verify the switch:

- The company obtains your authorization via a signed letter provided by the new company, which indicates, in writing, that you want to switch telephone companies;
- The company has an independent third party verify your oral authorization to switch;
- The company provides you with a toll-free number to call to confirm the request to switch companies;



- The company obtains your verbal authorization through use of a three-way conference call with the local telephone company in which no confidential or proprietary information is disclosed. **(Your local telephone company is prohibited from trying to persuade you not to switch telephone companies or from marketing other services during this conference call.)**

Keep in mind that your local, local long distance, and long distance service are considered separate services and, therefore, a separate switching authorization is needed for each.

Slamming “Block”

Your local telephone company must offer you the opportunity to enroll in a slamming protection program where a "block" of local toll and long distance service can be placed on your account – preventing an illegal switch. Customers who elect this protection are subject to similar verification procedures listed earlier, and the local company must provide separate verification for local and long distance service.

If Your Telephone Service is Slammed

Call the local and long distance telephone companies you want to do business with and explain:

- that you did not request service from the new company,
- that your service must be reconnected to your authorized company,
- that you want to be returned to the rate plan you used before the slam.

Call the company that slammed you and cancel the account. Advise the company that you want all charges billed at the rate you would have paid your authorized telephone company. If you are not satisfied with the response you receive from your authorized company or the company that slammed you, contact the MPSC to file a complaint at 800.292.9555, or rgchour@michigan.gov, or at the Commission's [online complaint page](#).

If a customer's telephone service provider is changed for any reason, the MPSC requires the local telephone company and the new company to notify the customer of the change within 10 days of the date of the change in order to help the customer identify the switch in service.

